KOPPEL: Good evening. I'm Ted Koppel, and this is Nightline. Those now-it-can-be-told books, people in the public eye seem ready as never before to bare their souls between hard covers. But is the purpose really to tell all or just to even old scores? And is there a double standard for top officials, compared to others, when it comes to disclosing sensitive information? We'll talk tonight with recent author, Alexander Haig, and with Frank Snepp, whose book on the CIA in Vietnam landed in him court.

* * * * * *

KOPPEL: It's one thing for a movie star or a baseball pitcher to tell all. It can be painful, but still mostly irrelevant, when the son or daughter of a beloved entertainer reveals another, less admirable, side to Mommy or Daddy dearest. But our guest, Alexander\Haig, was this country's secretary of State under an administration still in office. His new book is called 'Caveat.' It has nothing to do with female sexuality. It is too recent, uh, Secretary Haig, to be considered history. What, then, is the purpose of a book like this? ALEXANDER HAIG (Former Secretary of State): Well, Ted, it's, it's also not the confessions of a lover. It is, rather, a, uh, contemporary analysis of an atmosphere around the presidency which I believe that risks (sic) depriving this president of the greatness he is capable of achieving. And it, it's serving a substantive purpose, above all else.

KOPPEL: It could, I suppose, to carry on the analogy a little bit further, be called the memoirs of a jilted lover, as one who did not get exactly the kind of affection he thought he was gonna get when he joined this administration. HAIG: You, you might say that, but, uh, I don't think it was a question of love or hate or personalities, uh, but rather, a, uh, inadequate set of procedures and inadequate discipline for the carrying out of presidential decisions, and a multiplicity of voices that confuse those who are our friends and those who don't share our, our values.

KOPPEL: Is that, General Haig, most appropriately put in a private memorandum to the president or in a, in a book for the nation? HAIG (chuckling): Well, that's a good question, Ted. But let me tell you, that was in a private memorandum and repeatedly in private discussions with the president.

KOPPEL: Is there anything in this book, in other words, that might give--I, I--well, all right, let me use the old phrase, aid and comfort to the enemies of our country? In other words, this man is still president of the United States. The people with whom you had your differences in this administration are still trying to, to, to... HAIG: Oh, Ted, now...

KOPPEL: ...carry the burdens of that office. HAIG: Come on, Ted. Now you're a big fella who's been reporting this administration for three years. And there isn't anything in that book that's surprising to anyone. What there is in this book, hopefully, is some substantive relationships drawn to the, uh, problems of staff inadequacy and improper management of foreign affairs.

KOPPEL: No, but you also... HAIG: But having said that...

Continued

KOPPEL: But you also know what I, you also know what I'm talking about. It makes a difference when a reporter makes charges like that. But when someone who's not only been on the inside but has been the senior-most cabinet official makes charges like that, it has a different effect, doesn't it? HAIG: Ted, I hope you're not suggesting for even a moment that a public official somehow is entitled to a, a different perception of both (sic) reality, truth and the ability to express his views than a, than a newsman. Now, I know that's not your purpose.

KOPPEL: Well, you, you're absolutely right, and you know that in a couple of minutes, we're going to be talking to a former public official who, indeed, was judged by a different set of standards. HAIG: Sure. Well, let me answer this another way, Ted. Uh, you know, there wasn't a single revelation in my book in the terms of security violations that, uh, there were any difficulties at all with when the review group, uh, went over the book. Those minor differences they had were indeed minor, and they were changed. Why? Because hardly a single secret was held in this administration. I had a public reference, a rather definitive one, for any sensitive issue I discussed.

KOPPEL: Tell me a little bit about this security review group. When a former secretary of State decides to write his memoirs or a history or a, or an essay, for that matter, who goes over it, and how? HAIG: Well, this is done by a panel of very experienced security, political and foreign policy experts. And they go through it from tooth to comb.

KOPPEL: By definition, they would almost have all had to be, if not your subordinates, at least your juniors in the administration, right? HAIG (laughing): Well, let me tell you, an ex-bureaucrat has no subordinates in any admnistration.

KOPPEL: Well, that's, that's, that's winsome, Mr. Secretary, but hardly accurate. I mean, you had nothing but subordinates in this administration, with the exception of the president... HAIG: Uh, of course.

KOPPEL: ...and maybe the vice president. HAIG: Uh, well, now, don't get our priorities mixed up. (laughs) No, the simple facts are, I think it would've been very difficult for these men to be anything but extremely strict, given the circumstances of my departure and the nature of the book. And I think they did a, a very fine job and a difficult one.

KOPPEL: I guess what I'm asking is, and I don't wanna lay all the burden on you, although I think there is a little bit of a difference, since your administration is actually still in office, but when former presidents, former secretaries of State, Henry Kissinger's written two huge volumes of, of memoirs... HAIG: Of course.

KOPPEL: ...take advantage of the access that they had to all kinds of information to which other people will not have access for many, many years to come, to write memoirs which can be self-serving, is that right? Is that appropriate? HAIG: Oh, there's no question that it can be self-serving, and I think subjectivity tends to make them that way. But they're no different than

Continued

any other analyst, uh, in the business of analyzing contemporary affairs. And indeed, uh, let's face it, if we were to take another position, we'd be subjected to considerable criticism. Uh, I think the American people have a right to openness, they have a right to know, and I, I don't know of anyone in your business that isn't a strong advocate of that point of view.

KOPPEL: No, you're absolutely right, although there was one in your business, Geroge Marshall, who decided that the honorable thing to do was not to write memoirs at all. HAIG: Well, that was his personal choice and a matter of conscience for him. Uh, for me, as you know, I lived through Watergate. I was offered fabulous sums to, to ruminate about those experiences; I chose not to. On this occasion, I was sufficiently concerned on substantive grounds about the inadequacies of this organization to feel it was a public duty to outline at least my point of view.

KOPPEL: All right, General Haig. If you would, stand by for just a moment. When it comes to writing books about delicate policy matters, some people have more trouble than others. When we return, we'll be joined by former CIA officer Frank Snepp, whose book on Vietnam caused a government lawsuit that wound up in the Supreme Court.

KOPPEL: Frank\Snepp is a former CIA officer who wrote a book called 'Decent Interval,' a best-selling account of the collapse of the Saigon regime in 1975. Because Snepp had not cleared that manuscript with the CIA prior to publication, the government sued him. He was forced to turn over all royalties he earned to the government and is under court order to clear virtually everything he now writes, including speeches relating to his case with the CIA. Mr. Snepp is with us now in our New York studios. How all-encompassing is that, Mr. Snepp? What, what are you precluded from doing? FRANK SNEPP (Former CIA agent): Just about everything. The Supreme Court ruling in my case is so absolutely vague that I'm forced to clear everything, simply to determine if I have to clear it. And, ah, the ruling in my case, being imprecise, puts me under a censorship regime which is unprecedented in the country.

KOPPEL: You're a teacher right now, where, at University of Southern California? SNEPP: That's right.

KOPPEL: When you, ah, you and I met a few months ago, I seem to recall your telling me that when you give a lecture you can't even write down your notes because those would be subject to censorship. SNEPP: That's correct. That's correct.

KOPPEL: So nothing relating to your former life can be written down without prior clearance. SNEPP: Nothing relating to my present life, either, because, ah, the Supreme Court ruling and the injunction imposed in my case, ah, says that, ah, anything relating to intelligence matters generally must be subjected for censorship, and nobody knows what that means. And imprecision is the quicksand in censorship.

KOPPEL: All right. Do you feel that you have been particularly singled out here? Or is it in fact appropriate that a, a former official, office of the Central Intelligence Agency should be subjected to a harsher standard than

Continued

anyone else in government? SNEPP: I think everybody in government should be held to a higher standard than the journalists. I don't think the government officials have the right to, to leak secrets. I would disagree with General Haig's characterization of his book as not containing secrets. I could identify some. His collaborator on that book, *Charles McCarey, is a former CIA officer, who writes novels about the intelligence business. And because he's one of the good ole boys he has not had to clear any of his novels up to this particular point. So there is a double standard. Until the lawsuit against me, former secretaries of state or national security advisers were not obliged to clear their books. Now they are.

KOPPEL: All right. Before, before we give General Haig a chance to respond, since his book is clearly in the public domain, I don't see anything in appropriate in your identifying, since you say there are several, at least one secret that you claim is in the book. SNEPP: He refers to the Falklands crisis in first indications that we had we had the, ah, Argentines were preparing to move against the Falklands. He dates the indications March 31, 1982, I believe. If you're a Soviet counterintelligence officer, you could take that information and figure out just how much advance warning the United States is capable of. That kind of information is strategic intelligence.

KOPPEL: All right. General Haig? HAIG: Well, I, I didn't come tonight to debate a fellow I don't know and whose views have been challenged by the government and the courts for some months and years. On the other hand, ah, let me assure you anything that was written in my book, that came close to intelligence, was covered very thoroughly in the public print. Now that's not necessarily an excuse for doing so myself. The point to be made here is there are substantive lessons of tremendous importance to the American people and to officials who conduct, ah, policy and carry out foreign affairs. And these are judgments made by experienced people, ah, not only including myself but also the board that looked at the, ah, at the text. And I can assure you they did a very thorough and detailed job. With respect to my collaborator, Mr. McCarey, he had no input whatsoever into the substance of this book but merely provided advice and, ah, and what I called literary contributions.

KOPPEL: Who wrote it? Who actually sat down at the typewriter? HAIG: I wrote the book. I wrote it and dictated and typed. And I also rewrote every chapter several times but with the absolute indispensable help of, ah, Mr. McCarey.

KOPPEL: Is it, I, I guess what I'm tryin' to get to and the reason that we did ask Mr. Snepp to, to appear here this evening with you is that there does, and I'm asking you to step back for a moment, if you can, and examine what the government has done here. Why, why should there be a double standard? Why should a Frank Snepp be, be held to one standard and the former secretary of state, who certainly has access to as much classified information as a relatively mid-level CIA officer, be held to another? I'm, I'm asking you, General Haig? HAIG: Well, there should not be other than the initial contract of the individual. Anyone in the intelligence field today, Ted, ah, enters office, enters his career with a full sensitivity to the requirement for discretion. As a matter of fact, there's been a great deal of controversy over

Continued

the new regulation, ah, which has been, about to be promulgated by this administration because it, it broadens the intelligence community standards to the rest of the government and puts time limits of perpetuity on these, ah, restraints.

KOPPEL: If, ah, and, and, ah, when you say it's about to be promulgated, I'm, I'm not sure whether you know something I don't. I thought it had been more or less withdrawn for the time being. HAIG: Well, yeah, that's, that's, I understand is scheduled to be done sometime in the fall, ah, with congressional approval, if that approval is forthcoming.

KOPPEL: If, if those regulations had been in effect, would you have been able to write this book? HAIG: Of course, I would have been able to write the book. And, again, it would have been subject to the kind of scrutiny it already had. The difference is that I think the scrutiny that I had was entirely focused on security. Ah, the real problem with my book is not security, Ted. It's, it's perhaps political sensitivity, and there a judgment had to be made. And I think the benefits of the revelation of these facts is far more important than their continued submersion or the kinds of articulations that were going out into the press daily and distorting reality.

KOPPEL: All right. Frank Snepp, some closing thoughts from you. I'm sorry we don't have more time, but go ahead. SNEPP: I'd simply like to call your attention to the charges the government leveled against, ah, the New York Times and the Washington Post in the Pentagon Papers case. They said the publication of the Pentagon Papers would complicate diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the Vietnam war. And I think you could, ah, say the same thing about General Haig's book, that his publication would complicate diplomatic efforts to bring an end to certain, certain crises, which he knows a lot about and has written a lot about.

KOPPEL: All right. Gentlemen, on that note, I thank you both, Frank Snepp, Alexander Haig.